A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL

OF THE

ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR SEAMEN, AT GREENWICH,

ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1794,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR

A GENERAL FAST.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

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ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 26, 1774,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR

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BY THE REV. J. MAULE, B.A.

OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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1794.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

GOVERNOR,

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,

AND

OTHER OFFICERS,

OF THE

ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR SEAMEN

AT

GREENWICH,

THIS SERMON,

PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS,

WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT,

INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR VERY FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

JOHN MAULE.

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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,

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LIST OF OFFICERS

OF THE

ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR SEAMEN,

AT GREENWICH,

AND

GENTLEMEN PRESENT AT THE DELIVERY,

AT WHOSE REQUEST

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A

SERMON, &c.

JOSHUA i. 8.

This book of the law ſhall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou ſhalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayeſt obſerve to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou ſhalt make thy way proſperous, and then thou ſhalt have good ſucceſs.

IF with attentive obſervation we ſearch the records of the earlieſt antiquity, the annals of leſs remote periods, and the hiſtory of the pre-

ſent age; and thence endeavour to trace up to their ſource thoſe torrents of deſtruction, that have oft o'erwhelmed the kingdoms of the world; it will be found a truth, convincing beyond contradiction or diſpute, that irreligion is the deadly ſpring, whence all their ſtreams have been ſupplied: whether we regard the extirpation of the Canaanites from their luxuriant overflowing land; whether we look upon the diſaſtrous end of the once flouriſhing and ſplendid empire of Rome; or turn to the melancholy ſcenes of anarchy and ruin that diſgrace the name and hiſtory of France; from this ſingle, fatal ſource, the miſeries of all have

ſprung;

ſprung; and while they figure to us a fearful picture of the inſtability of human greatneſs, afford us an awful leſſon of the duties we owe to our God, and the dangerous conſequences that attend the deſertion of his laws.

Religion, whether it be conſidered as the means of preſent happineſs, or future glory, abounds with—how many perſuaſive charms to engage us in it's purſuit! Aſk the poor cottager whoſe lands have yielded to the blaſting ſtorm, whoſe ſcattered herds lie periſhing around him, whence he derives conſolation under his misfortunes? It is religion that teaches him ſubmiſſion to the will of heaven;

and that in proportion as he is reſigned, ſo ſhall he be rewarded.—Are ſome dear objects of our eſteem or love ſnatched from us by the cold hand of death? Religion pours the balm of comfort into our hearts; and bids us hope to meet them in a better world, where we ſhall part no more. Are we immerſed in war? Religion becomes the ſword of victory, and leads us on to conqueſt and to glory.

Such was it with Joſhua! The Iſraelites, freed from their Egyptian bondage, were now arrived on the borders of the promiſed land; they were about to enter that country where they ſhould meet the recompence of their paſt perils; where all

their labours ſhould be repaid. The venerable Moſes was no more: and the important charge of ſo vaſt an army was committed by the Lord to Joſhua. Joſhua was, indeed, every way qualified for ſo great an office: he had been inſtructed in the moſt important duties of religion from the tongue of his departed maſter; he had ſeen the wonders which his hand had wrought during their wanderings in the wilderneſs; he knew the nature and diſpoſition of the people, over whom he was appointed to command; and having been one of the miſſionaries to examine the ſituation of the land of Canaan, was perfectly acquainted with every requiſite

for the taſk. But neither the magnitude of his hoſt, his knowledge of the country, nor his abilities as a commander, were, in any wiſe, the means by which victory was to be obtained; by which ſo dear a bleſſing as the promiſed land was to be acquired. The Canaanites were to be overcome—not by numbers, for in this point they were not inferior to the armies of Iſrael;—not by valour, for they were a people inured to war, and vigorous, and powerful;—not by ſurpriſe, for on every ſide they were vigilant and prepared: No—religion was the power by which the Iſraelites were deſtined to be the conquerors;—by obſerving the laws

of God, delivered to them from on high, victory only was to be obtained; and from ſuch an obſervance the Lord aſſured them of ſucceſs. "This book of the law," ſays he, "ſhall not depart out of thy mouth; "but thou ſhalt meditate therein "day and night, that thou mayeſt "obſerve to do according to all that "is written therein; for then thou "ſhalt make thy way proſperous, "and then thou ſhalt have good ſucceſs." Religion was thus the primary exhortation of the Lord;— he commanded Joſhua to inſtruct his people as well in virtue as in war;— then, ſays he, ſhall thy ways be

crowned with proſperity, and thy endeavours be rewarded with ſucceſs.

Let us for a moment regard the ſituation of the Canaanites at this period of hiſtory. Deſcended from the virtuous Noah's guilty ſon, for whoſe crime the race of Canaan was accurſed of his father, we behold a people, who, for a ſeries of years, had been gradually approaching to the extremity of human wickedneſs. At the time that Joſhua was now preparing to enter into their country, there was not a vice, however horrid and unnatural, in which they had not wantonly indulged; no crimes,

crimes, however unexampled, which they had not introduced into the world; no ſpecies of impiety, ſhocking ſoever, and profane, which they had not gloried to practice and defend.

Such was the nation againſt whom Joſhua led on the Iſraelites to war: ſuch may I add the people, againſt whoſe pernicious policy we are now aſſembled to implore the aid of the Almighty. How important! how intereſting is the occaſion! No trivial cauſe convenes us here to-day: our conſtitution, our lives, our religion and liberty are at ſtake. And ſhall we caſt the precious gems away?

Shall

Shall we daſh from us the cup of bliſs, while yet it is in our power to partake of it? Shall we become the ſlaves of infidels? Each generous Britiſh heart muſt turn with indignant horror from the thought, and burn with ardor to evince it's love for it's country. Is it aſked, how is this love to be evinced? by all uniting in the common cauſe of virtue; by proſtrating ourſelves before the God of heaven, in whoſe hands are all the powers of victory and peace, and making him our defender. All the reſources which human knowledge can deviſe; all the means which human aid can adminiſter, ſhall avail but little if God be not on

our

our ſide. Shall we not labour then to gain him? Too long have vice and immorality already flouriſhed among us! Let us then trample their hated banners under our feet; let us entreat forgiveneſs of our ſins of the Almighty, and be indeed the children of God. A pious people alone can be proſperous;—a virtuous nation only can be an happy one.

It would be unneceſſary, on this occaſion, to enter into a philoſophic inveſtigation of the dreadful ravages which impiety effects; example ever ſpeaks more forcibly to the human heart: and while the neighbouring kingdom holds out ſo ſad a ſpectacle

for

for us to contemplate, we ſurely need no more to deter us from it's fatal principles.

Progreſſively advancing to the pinnacle of earthly ſplendor, France for a while, dazzled the ſurrounding nations by her brightneſs. Her courts and palaces were models of elegance and grandeur; her fields glowed with the richeſt produce of a fruitful ſoil; diſtinguiſhed for politeneſs, her manners were the imitation of the world; and the deareſt object of a Frenchman's love and veneration was—his King. Alas! how changed! but mark the fatal cauſe: a negligence of religion had inſen-

ſibly

ſibly crept into her ſyſtem; luxury ſpread it's dangerous ſnares for her undoing; till vice at length, publicly countenanced and protected, like a raging earthquake, tore up the ſumptuous fabric from it's foundations, and ſcattered, it triumphant. Behold the direful ruin ſhe has made! Here ſtood their monarch's throne! Torn from his ſeat by the fury of a mad banditti, he lives no more to fill it: the murderous axe long ſince doomed him to deſtruction. Here ſat their queen! the hapleſs victim of revenge; ſhe too has ſunk beneath their ſavage cruelty. Their children! what heart but muſt feel for them, or with a

parent's,

parent's, or a brother's fondneſs! their children, robbed of a parent's care, linger out their youthful hours, in priſon and unprotected, the innocent ſuffering objects of their jealouſy. And can they proceed further in iniquity? Alas! the very name and power of the Almighty are diſavowed; his altars and his temples are profaned; anarchy and injuſtice range uncontrouled throughout the land; and murder, through every province, marks her way with the blood of the aged, the innocent, and the good. Nor ends the ſtory here: to every country would they extend their work; and into every ſoil implant their fatal ſyſtem of diſorder. How

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neceſſary is it then, if we would preſerve inviolate thoſe bleſſings, which the kind hand of heaven has beſtowed on Britain; if we would ſave our families and fortunes; if we would tarry yet a few years longer on the earth, and ſpend thoſe years in liberty: how neceſſary is it, I ſay, that we guard againſt the undermining ſubtlety of irreligion, and repent us of our ſins. Manifold are they, and heinous, and offenſive; manifold too are the motives to repentance; and none more powerful than thoſe real bleſſings, which we, the natives of this proſperous Iſle, enjoy.——Have we not a conſtitution perfect as human wiſdom can deviſe; under the

ſafe

ſafe protection of whoſe laws the poor man may reſt ſecure from the ambition of his wealthier neighbour, and ſheltered in his lowly cottage, taſte the ſweets of liberty? Do not our hills, our vallies, and our woods, abound with all the requiſites of nature, and the means of ſafety? Have we not, at this time, a ſovereign anxious for his people's welfare, and watchful to promote it? And ſhall we not prize theſe bleſſings as we ought? Let us be truely grateful for them; let us entreat our heavenly Father to blot out the remembrance of our paſt iniquities, and to give us grace to turn from the temptations that may enſue. Wickedneſs and

vice

vice have already triumphed over France! Let us beware that they triumph not likewiſe over us. Too great hath already been their power! Too many have already become their votaries! Oh, beware then! and if that glorious conſtitution, under whoſe ſacred influence we live, be worth tranſmitting uncorrupted to poſterity; if our country, abundant in her oaks, her corn, her fruits and flocks, be worth preſerving from pillage and devaſtation; if our manufactures and our commerce be worthy our conſideration or regard; if the playful endearments of our ſmiling infants be not unheeded by each parent's breaſt; if our liberties

and lives be valuable, let us rouſe from our inactive lethargy; let us ſhake off the enfeebling fetters of ſin, and dare nobly to be virtuous. It is indeed time, my brethren! Let us turn then to the Lord in weeping, faſting, and praying, in true ſincerity of heart; and beg of him to warm and invigorate our drowſy wills and affections, to ſtrengthen and confirm our reſolutions of amendment. You, my friends, have fought and conquered for your country! Can you now forbear to pray for her? to exert yourſelves once more in her defence? Direct, O Lord, our ſupplications, which we offer before thy throne; and make us feel, with

penitence and thankfulneſs, how good, and gracious, and merciful is thy providence. And of thy grace ſuffer us not to return to our former ſinfulneſs and diſobedience, nor again to yield to thoſe evil paſſions and deſires, which have moſt deſervedly brought down thy judgments upon us; but ſave us, O God, from ourſelves, as well as from our enemies, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; to whom with Thee, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all honour and glory, might, majeſty, and dominion, henceforth and for evermore.

FINIS.

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